

THE PROLONGED DOWNFALL OF THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF AFGHANISTAN

A Monograph

by

MAJ Gary P. McDonald

US Army



School of Advanced Military Studies
United States Army Command and General Staff College
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas

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Name of Candidate: MAJ Gary P. McDonald

Monograph Title: The Prolonged Downfall of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan

Approved by:

_____, Monograph Director
Thomas Bruscino, Ph.D.

_____, Seminar Leader
Uwe F. Jansohn, COL

_____, Director, School of Advanced Military Studies
Henry A. Arnold III, COL, IN

Accepted this 22nd day of May 2014 by:

_____, Director, Graduate Degree Programs
Robert F. Baumann, Ph.D.

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ABSTRACT

THE PROLONGED DOWNFALL OF THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF AFGHANISTAN, by
MAJ Gary P. McDonald, 44 pages.

This monograph seeks to identify contributing factors, other than continued Soviet aid, that led to the prolonged survival of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan Government between the Soviet withdrawal in 1989 and its final collapse in 1992. It will discuss three key factors that gave the DRA a marked advantage over the mujahedeen. The negotiated settlement of the Geneva Accords that led to the Soviets withdrawal, the fragmentation of the mujahedeen alliance following the withdrawal, and the DRA policy of National Reconciliation. It will conclude with a comparison of the effects of these factors on both the DRA and mujahedeen, using the economist Max Weber's theory on the source of legitimate domination by bureaucracies.

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ACRONYMS

AIG	Afghan Interim Government
DRA	Democratic Republic of Afghanistan
ISI	Inter-Service Intelligence (Pakistani intelligence agency)
KGB	Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti (Soviet intelligent agency)
KhAD	Khadamat-e Aetla'at-e Dawliti (Afghanistan internal intelligence agency)
MoD	Ministry of Defense (DRA branch responsible for the national defense)
MoI	Ministry of Interior (DRA branch responsible for police actions)
PDPA	Peoples Democratic Party of Afghanistan (communist political party)
RA	Republic of Afghanistan (name changed in 1990)
WAD	Wizarat-I Ettela'at-I Daulati, Ministry of National Security (Predecessor of the KhAD)

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INTRODUCTION

Both Afghans and foreigners remain tied to visions of what they wish the country to be that obscures its present reality and possible futures

—Thomas Barfield, *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History*

The three years of independent rule by the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan (DRA) after the Soviet Union's withdrawal is often likened unto a nationwide buzkashi contest. Whitney Azoy used this metaphor to describe the history of political struggle in Afghanistan.¹ Buzkashi is a traditional Afghan competition where mounted players engage in a violent struggle to gain control of a goat or calf carcass. In the traditional version of this game, there are no set teams and no limits to the number of participants, players win by maintaining control of the carcass for the longest period. Riders, called chapandaz, often form coalitions and partnerships to gain the upper hand over their opponents.² Wealthy or influential leaders will recruit successful chapandaz to ride for them in a buzkashi game, splitting the bounty if they win.³ Likewise, recruits will side with the leader that gives them the best chances of winning, sometimes switching side's midgame.

This particular game began when the last Soviet forces left Afghanistan in 1989 and ended when Dr. Muhammad Najibullah lost his coalition and withdrew from the field of play in 1992. The most common reasoning attributed to the DRA's continued existence post withdrawal was continued aid received from the Soviet Union.⁴ While external financing was a critical factor to their success, this reasoning alone dismisses a multitude of other factors that may have

¹Whitney Azoy, *Buzkashi, Game and Power in Afghanistan*, 2nd ed., (Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, 2003), 125-143.

²Azoy, *Buzkashi, Game and Power in Afghanistan*, 153.

³Ibid., 10-15.

⁴Barnett R. Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan: State Formation and Collapse in the International System* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), 264.

contributed to their survival. The question then arises of, what other factors, besides foreign aid enabled the DRA to play the game after the Soviet withdrawal? Three key factors enabled this success. First, the process of the Geneva Accords strengthened the legitimacy of the DRA, while undermining that of the resistance. Second, an already fractured resistance movement lost its unifying cause once Soviet forces withdrew. Third, the increased legitimacy of the Afghan government, aided by the National Reconciliation Policy empowered the regime, increasing their appeal to a broader population. These three factors enabled the DRA to co-opt disenfranchised groups and strength their relative advantage over the mujahedeen.

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December of 1979 initiated a regional conflict that has endured for over three decades. During the first ten years of the conflict, Afghanistan underwent drastic political and social changes that seemed to lock the country into a path of self-destruction. Aided by the regionally dominate Soviet Union, the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) seized power in Kabul and established a communist regime known as the DRA. This newly formed regime attempted to revolutionize the social, political, and economic structures of the traditional and agrarian society of Afghanistan. This rapid modernization resulted in a popular uprising among the rural class who viewed the change as an affront to their traditions and religious beliefs. In 1985, President Mikhail Gorbachev assumed responsibility of the "Afghan problem" as their new Soviet head of state.⁵ Gorbachev viewed the Afghan conflict as a "bleeding wound" and sought to an honorable withdrawal plan that would not weaken the Soviets appeal to the third world. The final withdrawal plan called for broadening the appeal of the DRA and seeking favorable terms for the future of the regime through the Geneva Accords.⁶ The success of this plan is evident in the DRA's survival after the withdrawal, far surpassing the

⁵Artemy Kalinovsky, "Old Politics, New Diplomacy: The Geneva Accords and the Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan," *Cold War History* 8, no. 3 (August 2008): 381-82.

⁶Artemy Kalinovsky, "Decision-Making and the Soviet War in Afghanistan," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 11, no. 4 (Fall 2009): 61-62.

world's expectations for the regime. Most observers of the conflict expected the government to collapse due to internal rivalries between political parties or by external pressure from the loosely allied resistance fighters.

The DRA underwent several changes in its short fourteen-year history. In the years between its inception in 1978 and the Soviet's decision to withdraw, DRA had established all the functions and departments of a modern government. Unfortunately, they had also developed a reputation of corruption, infighting, and ineptitude among the Soviets and Afghan people.⁷ Weak leadership within the DRA caused an overreliance on Soviet advisors and military, eroding its independence and legitimacy.⁸ New leadership could distance itself from the previous regime while transforming the DRA into a coalition government with a broader appeal. The new leader chosen to oversee this transformation was the former head of the Khadamat-e Aetla'at-e Dawlti (State Intelligence Agency commonly referred to as the KhAD), Mohammad Najibullah.⁹ The new regime immediately focused its attention on a nationwide cease-fire and reconciliation program aimed at the repatriation of the mujahedeen factions.¹⁰ Initially, this effort met with measured success as hostilities around the urban areas subsided. However, the policy failed to address the primary grievance among mujahedeen fighters, which was the withdrawal of Soviet forces. Additionally, the Najibullah regime implemented internal changes to the ministries designed to incorporate traditional values and reverse the social changes conducted under the previous regime.¹¹ With its new leader, the DRA government transformed itself into a quasi-democratic institution capable of overseeing the Soviet withdrawal, maintaining an acceptable

⁷Ludwig W. Adamec, *Dictionary of Afghan Wars, Revolutions, and Insurgencies* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1996), 184-185.

⁸Kalinovsky, "Old Politics, New Diplomacy," 384-386.

⁹Adamec, *Dictionary of Afghan Wars, Revolutions, and Insurgencies*, 42-43.

¹⁰Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*, 146-148.

¹¹William Maley, *The Afghanistan Wars* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 171-172.

level of control over the country.

The world watched as the last Soviet forces withdrew from Afghanistan on February 15, 1989. The common expectation within the Soviet Union and other nations was a rapid collapse of the DRA.¹² However, this did not happen. The primary security elements of the DRA, the Army, KhAD, Sarandoy (state police agency under the direction of the Ministry of Interior¹³) and a variety of loyal militias would continue to resist mujahedeen for another three years. Growth in both the Army and KhAD were integral factors that influenced the DRA's ability to control the population and provide as much, if not more, stability than the Soviet were able to achieve during their occupation.¹⁴

The final collapse of the DRA came on March 18, 1992 with the formal resignation of Sayyid Muhammad Najibullah. The primary factor that contributed to demise of the DRA was the lack of financial aid, as opposed to the success or support of the opposition. Without the influx of foreign aid, the DRA was no longer able to retain the services of its military forces and maintain civil order. This monograph will address the other factors that enabled the DRA to maintain control of the country after the Soviet withdrawal.

Literature Review

Multiple sources of information exist on the Afghan-Soviet war. This literature falls predominately into one of three categories: social-political impacts, Soviet forces experience, or the mujahedeen experience. Most of the scholarly sources that discuss the DRA and their operations do so in reference to one of these three topics. When the DRA finally collapsed, most

¹²Tom Rogers, *The Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan: Analysis and Chronology* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1992), 222.

¹³Adamec, *Dictionary of Afghan Wars, Revolutions, and Insurgencies*, 196.

¹⁴David G. Fivecoat, "Leaving the Graveyard: The Soviet Union's Withdrawal from Afghanistan," *Parameters* 42, no. 2 (Summer 2012): 7-8.

of its high-level leadership disappeared, dissolving into one of the several mujahedeen groups or killed. Likewise, minimal documentation of the devastating civil war that followed the fall of the DRA makes research on the topic problematic.¹⁵ With these secondary sources, this monograph seeks to find the reasoning behind the DRA successes.

The preponderance of published work on Afghanistan focuses on the complex social and political issues that define its modern history. Most notable of these works are, *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History* by Thomas Barfield, *Afghanistan: A Modern History* by Angelo Rasanayagam and *Afghanistan: Mullah, Marx, and Mujahid*, by Ralph H. Magnus and Naby Eden.¹⁶ These social-political titles focus much of their research on the complexity of the Afghan society as a whole and its impacts on the various governments that have existed there. This includes analysis of the unique historical, geographical and environmental conditions that have shaped that society. The existence of multiple cultural and ethnic groups within the borders of Afghanistan is the foundation of the country's long standing social discontent. *The Afghanistan Wars*, by William Maley, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan: State Formation and Collapse in the International System*, by Barnett Rubin, *Afghanistan-The Great Game Revisited*, edited by Rosanne Klass, *Reaping the Whirlwind*, by Michael Griffith, and *Revolution unending: Afghanistan*, by Gilles Dorronsoro analyzes the political and social issues in the context of the Afghan-Soviet conflict.¹⁷ Additionally, *Out of Afghanistan*, by Diego Cordovez and Selig S.

¹⁵Barnett R. Rubin "Post-Cold War State Disintegration: The Failure of International Conflict Resolution in Afghanistan," *Journal of International Affairs* 46, no. 2 (Winter 1993): 469-492

¹⁶Thomas Barfield, *Afghanistan: a Cultural and Political History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010); Ralph H. Magnus and Eden Naby, *Afghanistan: Mullah, Marx, and Mujahid* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998).

¹⁷William Maley, *The Afghanistan Wars* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002); Barnett R. Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan: State Formation and Collapse in the International System*, 2nd ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002); Rosanne Klass, ed., *Afghanistan, the Great Game Revisited* (New York, NY: Freedom House, 1990); Michael Griffin, *Reaping the Whirlwind: The Taliban Movement in Afghanistan* (London, UK: Pluto Press, 2001); Gilles Dorronsoro, *Revolution Unending: Afghanistan, 1979 to the Present*, trans. John King (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2005).

Harrison and *Untying the Afghan Knot*, by Riaz M. Khan discuss the political and social difficulties of reaching the negotiated settlement of the Geneva Accords.¹⁸

These sources are of great worth to anyone striving to understand the complex culture of Afghanistan. The titles in this category generally seek to identify the various ethnic and tribal structures and then analyze their influence on social interactions, both internally and externally. The geopolitical limitations of the region addressed by these authors describe the regional importance of Afghanistan. This is beneficial when analyzing the external factors that shaped the DRA under Najibullah, but are of limited value in understanding why he was successful. However, a glimpse into Afghanistan's long-standing traditions and feudal monarchy helps to understand why the Afghan resistance struggled to resist change. It also helps one understand the difficulty in gaining and maintaining alliances.

The Soviet Union documented its experience in Afghanistan well, and with its collapse in 1991, several new accounts have emerged. Many of these works cover the Soviet tactics and political support in detail and illuminate the difficulties that foreign forces face in the country. One of the most commonly read author on the subject is Lester Grau. *The Bear Went Over the Mountain, The Soviet-Afghan War: How a Superpower Fought and Lost* and *Breaking Contact Without Leaving Chaos: The Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan* offer a look inside the Soviet Union's struggle against the mujahedeen.¹⁹ Other authors that have covered this topic focus their analysis on the withdrawal phase from 1985 to 1989. Mitrokhin Vasili offers a firsthand account of the Soviet experience in *The KGB in Afghanistan* and *The World Was Going Our Way: The*

¹⁸Diego Cordovez and Selig S. Harrison, *Out of Afghanistan: The Inside Story of the Soviet Withdrawal* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1995); Riaz M. Khan, *Untying the Afghan Knot: Negotiating Soviet Withdrawal* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991).

¹⁹Lester W. Grau, *The Bear Went Over the Mountain: Soviet Combat Tactics in Afghanistan* (Washington, DC: Diane Pub Co, 1996); Russian General Staff, *The Soviet-Afghan War: How a Superpower Fought and Lost*, edited by Lester W. Grau and Michael A. Gress (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2002); Lester W. Grau, "Breaking Contact Without Leaving Chaos: The Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan," *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 20, no. 2 (May 2007): 235-261.

KGB and the Battle for the Third World, co-authored with Christopher M. Andrew. Artemy Kalinovsky is another Russian author that provides an inside perspective of the Soviet experience in *A Long Goodbye: The Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan*, along with several articles in periodicals.²⁰ The preponderance of work on the Soviet experience came after the fall of communism when external authors were able to access archived documents and interviews. Key works include *Building Afghanistan's Security Forces in Wartime: the Soviet Experience* by Olga Olikier, *The Fateful Pebble: Afghanistan's Role in the Fall of the Soviet Empire* by Anthony Arnold, Gregory Feifer's, *The Great Gamble: The Soviet War in Afghanistan*, and *The Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan: Analysis and Chronology* by Tom Rogers.²¹ These titles provide the reader with an inside look at the problem the Soviets faced as they fought the mujahedeen or advised Afghan leaders. They offer some detail and analysis on the internal functions of the DRA prior to the withdrawal.

The final literature category consists of titles published on the Afghan-Soviet conflict covering the mujahedeen's interests. Often referred to as Afghan freedom fighters, this loosely aligned group of opposition fighters captured the world's imagination as the underdog resisting the communist superpower. Lester W. Grau co-authored *The Other Side of the Mountain* with Ali Ahamd Jalalia. Similar to the *The Bear Went Over the Mountain* it analyses mujahedeen tactics using vignettes. *Ghost Wars*, by Steve Coll, *Soldiers of God*, by Robert D. Kaplan and *The Bear Trap*, by Mohammad Yousaf focus their analysis on the period covering the Soviet invasion

²⁰Artemy M. Kalinovsky, *A Long Goodbye: the Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011); "Old Politics, New Diplomacy: The Geneva Accords and the Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan," *Cold War History* 8, no. 3 (August 2008): 381-404; "Decision-Making and the Soviet War in Afghanistan," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 11, no. 4 (Fall 2009): 46-73; Vasilii Mitrokhin, *The KGB in Afghanistan* (Washington, DC: Cold War International History Project, 2002).

²¹Olga Olikier, *Building Afghanistan's Security Forces in Wartime: the Soviet Experience* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2011); Anthony Arnold, *The Fateful Pebble: Afghanistan's Role in the Fall of the Soviet Empire* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1993); Gregory Feifer, *The Great Gamble: The Soviet War in Afghanistan* (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 2009); Tom Rogers, *The Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan: Analysis and Chronology* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1992).

onward.²² *Doomed in Afghanistan*, by Phillip Corwin provides a detailed account of the fall of Najibullah and DRA starting in 1992.²³ *Afghan Wars*, by Edgar O'Ballance and *Afghanistan: A Military History from Alexander the Great to the War against the Taliban*, by Stephen Tanner provide a deeper perspective on Afghanistan's history and the role that conflict played in shaping their society.²⁴ Developing a broad view of Afghanistan's historic interactions with invading countries provides a deeper understanding of the social and cultural context of the mujahedeen.²⁵ The *Dictionary of Afghan Wars, Revolutions and Insurgencies*, by Ludwig W. Adamic is an excellent reference that provides an overview of major Afghan conflicts, including a chronology, as well as definitions of terms, names, and organizations.²⁶ These titles focus their attention on the difficulties facing the mujahedeen during their struggle against the Soviets and the DRA. While many these sources provide second hand knowledge, none of them addresses the successes of the DRA. The focus of this research is the DRA and the actions taken to remain in power after the withdrawal of Soviet forces.

Methodology

This monograph is a study of the how the Afghan-Soviet conflict ended in 1989 and the DRA maintained its seat of power in Kabul for another three years after the Soviet withdrawal.

²²Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and Bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2005); Robert D. Kaplan, *Soldiers of God: With Islamic Warriors in Afghanistan and Pakistan*, (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 2001); Mohammad Yousaf and Mark Adkin, *The Bear Trap: Afghanistan's Untold Story* (London, UK: Leo Cooper, 1992).

²³Phillip Corwin, *Doomed in Afghanistan: A UN Officer's Memoir of the Fall of Kabul and Najibullah's Failed Escape, 1992* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2003).

²⁴Stephen Tanner, *Afghanistan: a Military History from Alexander the Great to the War Against the Taliban* (Philadelphia, PA: Da Capo Press, 2009).

²⁵Ali Ahmad Jalali and Lester W. Grau, *The Other Side of the Mountain: Mujahideen Tactics in the Soviet-Afghan War* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Foreign Military Studies Office, 1995), preface xv-xviii.

²⁶Ludwig W. Adamec, *Dictionary of Afghan Wars, Revolutions, and Insurgencies* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1996).

The study analyzes three distinct events that enabled the DRA to maintain their position of authority. The first section examines the negotiated settlement of the Geneva Accords that led to the Soviet Union's honorable exit in 1989.²⁷ The second section identifies the context of the mujahedeen as an alliance, analyzes their attempt to gain legitimacy and offers an analysis of the demise. The third section addresses the regimes leader Dr. Muhammad Najibullah and the changes they implemented after the Soviet withdraw. Finally, the analysis will conclude with the collapse of the DRA and a caparison of their legitimization against that of the mujahedeen using Max Webber's theory on legitimate domination.

AN END TO THE CONFLICT

...history is better at revealing than at proving....

—Peter Paret, *The Cognitive Challenge of War*

The context in which Najibullah would have to govern in Afghanistan after the Soviet withdrawal was established through the Geneva Accords of 1988. The final agreement was the product of several negotiated compromises that best fulfilled the multiple interests that surrounded the conflict. It provided the Soviets with a legal framework to withdraw their troops, left the DRA in control of the country while establishing the grounds for democratic elections, and set the conditions for a return of the refugees. Negotiating the Soviet withdrawal added legitimacy to their position as the ruling government of Afghanistan. Conversely, the absence of an alternate government of the mujahedeen undermined their legitimacy and further fractured their already weak alliance. The combined effect of this process was a key factor that enabled the DRA to build unity as the mujahedeen lost it.

²⁷Kalinovsky, "Old Politics, New Diplomacy," 382-383.

Road to the Agreement

The first six rounds of the Geneva Accords were conducted from 1982-86 and resulted in no significant headway towards a conflict resolution in Afghanistan.²⁸ This was primarily due to the problematic and opposing interests that emerged through the conflict. The Politburo insisted on an enduring communist government in Afghanistan. Although the mujahedeen were not directly involved in the talks, they were adamantly opposed to a communist regime in Kabul.²⁹ Both the Pakistanis and the mujahedeen were unified in their desire to force a Soviet withdrawal and establishing a noncommunist government in Kabul. This impasse began to change in 1985 when Michal Gorbachev was elected General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Gorbachev sought an honorable solution for the Afghan Problem and reenergized the Geneva Accords process to achieve that goal.³⁰ The result would be a great compromise on the various competing interests in the region.

Pakistan bore the brunt of the regional instability caused by the conflict, in the form of a humanitarian and security crisis along its western border. Pakistan also reaped the reward of becoming the primary conduit for military and humanitarian aid to the region, greatly increasing their international standing. This aid and recognition served to strengthen their tenuous position against their regional antagonist, India as well.³¹ Any agreement that would end the conflict would also bring a reduction in aid, as well as lowering the prominence Pakistan had enjoyed thus

²⁸Rogers, *The Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan*, 22-23.

²⁹Yaqub Khan served as Pakistan's primary negotiator through the first five years of the talks and asserted the legitimacy of engaging the DRA in the talks based on the legal status they possessed as an accredited Member State of the UN. In contrast, the resistance did not enjoy that same status and were therefore not party to the negotiations. Diego Cordovez and Selig S. Harrison, *Out of Afghanistan: The Inside Story of the Soviet Withdrawal* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1995), 7-8.

³⁰Rosanne Klass, "Afghanistan: The Accords," *Foreign Affairs* 66, no. 5 (Summer 1988): 928.

³¹Riaz M. Khan, *Untying the Afghan Knot: Negotiating Soviet Withdrawal* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991), 260-261.

far.³² As the conflict waged, Pakistan became the center of the resistance movement. The Pakistani Inter-Service Intelligence (ISI) worked closely with mujahedeen commanders and controlled the distribution of military aid to their respective groups. This greatly increased Pakistan's influence over the opposition groups. A stable Afghan Government with shared interests could provide a regional ally against India. For Pakistan, an Islamic government in Afghanistan seemed the best way to align their mutual interests. It would also provide another buffer against Soviet expansion in central Asia.

For the Soviets, their interests began to shift by 1987, as their vision for a regional communist ally in Afghanistan became increasingly unattainable. Instead, the Soviets began to seek a resolution that would provide a Soviet friendly country along its central Asian border.³³ Two key points shaped this shift. First, the Soviets sought to save their reputation among other third world countries teetering towards socialism.³⁴ The second revolved around the spread of Islamic fundamentalism threatening the soft underbelly of its Central Asian States.³⁵ With or without the Geneva Accords, the Soviets wanted to reduce the presence in Afghanistan and the accords provided the means to accomplish this without losing face.

The Afghan interests were divided, principally along two lines, those that supported the resistance and those that were pro-DRA. Within the pro-DRA camp, the goal was to maintain the seat of government within Afghanistan. Additionally, they both wanted to continue to modernize Afghanistan, although each party carried its own agenda along this line. To meet these goals, the DRA needed to create separation from the Soviets to gain popular support, while maintaining its military and fiscal support from the Soviet Union. The recognition of the DRA in the negotiation

³²Riaz M. Khan, *Untying the Afghan Knot*, 237.

³³Kalinovsky, "Old Politics, New Diplomacy," 383-384.

³⁴Kalinovsky, "Decision-Making and the Soviet War in Afghanistan," 62.

³⁵Gregory Feifer, *The Great Gamble: The Soviet War in Afghanistan* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2009), 240.

process of the Geneva Accords was an essential step in galvanizing its image as the proper authority for Afghanistan.

Identifying common interests among the resistance or refugee population are problematic. In broad terms, they wanted the Soviets out of Afghanistan, but beyond this unifying cause, the interests began to split along social and tribal lines. The majority Pashtu population generally supported the Pashtu aligned mujahedeen parties. Their political interests ranged from the fundamentalists who supported an Islamic government, to the traditionalist desiring a return of the king and the separation of religion from government.³⁶ The minority Tajik populations supported more secular leaders and were leery of the traditionally Pashtu dominated forms of government of the past. The Hazara, a minority population of Shia Muslims that sought refuge in Iran, was largely dismissed from the discussions of the future Afghan government structure. This group favored a more secular form of government as well, but representation in the new government was their primary concern.³⁷

Iran experienced the spillover of the prolonged conflict in Afghanistan through an estimated two million Shia refugees. Multiple resistance groups emerged from within this refugee population, influenced and supported by Iran.³⁸ Iran refused to take part in the accords and challenged their legitimacy based on exclusion of the refugee and mujahedeen representatives. The Pakistani representative in the negotiations served as intermediary to Iran and kept the Iranian government informed throughout the process.³⁹ Primary Iranian interests in the

³⁶Zalmay Khalilzad, *Prospects for the Afghan Interim Government* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 1991), 11-13. Also Richard P. Cronin, "Afghanistan after the Soviet Withdrawal Contenders for Power" (congressional research service: report for congress, Washington, DC, March 2, 1989), 11.

³⁷Khan, *Untying the Afghan Knot*, 77-80.

³⁸Richard P. Cronin, "Afghanistan after the Soviet Withdrawal Contenders for Power," (Congressional Research Service: report for congress, Washington, DC, March 2, 1989), 18-19.

³⁹Anonymous, "A UN Success: Four-Part Afghanistan Agreement Signed in Geneva," *UN Chronicle* 25, no. 2 (June 1988): 8.

negotiations centered on the inclusion of Afghanistan's Shia population in any representative coalition, as well as the Soviet withdrawal.⁴⁰ While this did not play a major factor at Geneva, it did affect the possibility of establishing a viable interim government prior the Soviet withdrawal. Additionally, Pakistan's role and influence in the negotiations became more prominent with Iran's refusal to participate.

Saudi Arabia's financial support to the mujahedeen matched that of the United States throughout the conflict.⁴¹ In addition to financial support, Saudi Arabia provided ideological support to the mujahedeen as a way to counter the increasing Shia fundamentalism that was infiltrating from Iran.⁴² The Saudi's were a primary supporter of the Islamic fundamentalist mujahedeen leader Hekmatayar whose anti-United States views mirrored those of fundamentalist wahabis in the Arabian Peninsula.⁴³

Both the United States and the Soviet Union participated in the Geneva Accord negotiations as guarantors on behalf of Pakistan and Afghanistan respectively.⁴⁴ The primary American interests in Afghanistan centered on the containment of communism, while maintaining regional stability. However, there was disagreement on the long-term goals for Afghanistan after the Soviet forces withdrew. The interests split between addressing the humanitarian crisis, stability in the Gulf region, and preventing the spread of fundamentalism.⁴⁵ Throughout the negotiations, the United States focused on two key objectives. First the establishment of a self-determined government in Kabul, and second a secession of all foreign aid to the DRA.

⁴⁰Khan, *Untying the Afghan Knot*, 102-103.

⁴¹Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 65.

⁴²Ibid., 216.

⁴³Ibid., 226.

⁴⁴Anonymous, "A UN Success: Four-Part Afghanistan Agreement Signed in Geneva," 13.

⁴⁵Cronin, "Afghanistan after the Soviet Withdrawal Contenders for Power," 31.

The Final Agreement

The final bilateral agreement was signed on April 14, 1988 by four signatories representing Afghanistan, Pakistan, Soviet Union, and the United States. It represented a best-fit compromise incorporating the varying interests that were involved in the process. The accords focused on four essential conditions, designed to maintain stability after the Soviet withdrawal: (a) a nonaligned and sovereign Afghanistan and Pakistan; (b) an Afghan government and economic system chosen by the people, without influence or interference from another state; (c) the immediate withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan; (d) a return of the Afghan refugees.⁴⁶ This solution provided the Soviets with an honorable framework to withdraw their forces and for the establishment of a self-determined government in Kabul.⁴⁷ Until an alternate governing body presented itself, the DRA would remain as the governing body of Afghanistan. This solution, combined with the U.N. recognition in the accords process, greatly increased its position as the legitimate authority of Afghanistan. As part of the non-interference agreement both Afghanistan and Pakistan were to refrain from support of any kind in rebellious or secessionist activities aimed at the other. This included arming, training, or harboring subversive groups within their territory.⁴⁸ However, it did not include any restrictions on state-to-state aid, namely the continuation of Soviet military and economic aid to the recognized government of Afghanistan. This caveat circumvented the intent of the accords and led to the controversial policy of “symmetry” between the United States and the Soviet Union. The policy allowed both states to circumvent the military aid provisions of the signed agreement.⁴⁹

⁴⁶Anonymous, “A UN Success: Four-Part Afghanistan Agreement Signed in Geneva,” 7.

⁴⁷Klass, “Afghanistan: The Accords,” 937.

⁴⁸Anonymous, “A UN Success: Four-Part Afghanistan Agreement Signed in Geneva,” Article 2, para 7-13.

⁴⁹Cordovez and Harrison, *Out of Afghanistan*, 7-8.

Both the Soviets and the United States served as guarantors of the Geneva Accords and pledged to support noninterference in Afghanistan. The agreement left room for Soviet to continue providing advisors, as well as military and financial aid to the DRA. The Soviets claimed a legal right to maintain support in Afghanistan, based on the long-standing Afghan-Soviet treaty from 1921. In response, the United States insisted on a policy of “symmetry” in foreign aid to the mujahedeen that would be withdrawn in proportion to a drawdown of Soviet aid to the DRA.⁵⁰ For the DRA this meant they would continue to receive the resources needed to rule, while strengthening their position as the legitimate authority. Foreign aid to the resistance continued to go through Pakistan’s ISI for distribution, increasing their control and influence over mujahedeen leaders.⁵¹ This created a shift in the public’s perception of the mujahedeen as serving foreign interests ahead of their own.

The recognition of DRA as the legitimate authority in Afghanistan caused further fracturing of the mujahedeen alignment. The exclusion of the refugee population, the mujahedeen and the AIG caused them to have little vested interest in its outcome. Had the mujahedeen been included, it is doubtful that they would have agreed to the non-interference clause, severing their aid and eliminating their safe haven in Pakistan. With no clear leader emerging from the resistance, each competing organization pursued their individual or tribal interests, resulting in the emergence of internal conflict. A primary cause of infighting was the distribution of power within the interim government that would replace the DRA.⁵² A popular Tajik commander, Ahmad Shah Massoud, commented on the coming turmoil “I hope the Russians stay another four

⁵⁰Klass, “Afghanistan: The Accords,” 935.

⁵¹House Committee on Committee on Foreign Affairs, U.S. AFGHANISTAN POLICY, 100th Cong., 2d sess., 1988, H. Doc., serial 74, pt. 134, E1687. 11-13, 18, 24, 32

⁵²William Maley, *The Afghanistan Wars* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 174-178.

years... we're experts in guerrilla warfare, not government."⁵³ When the Soviets completed their withdrawal in February 1989 and transitioned the security of Afghanistan to the DRA forces, the mujahedeen's interim government was in disarray. The failure of the mujahedeen to capitalize on this vulnerable period enabled the DRA to show initial success, reaffirming its authority and legitimacy within the population.

The final negotiated settlement reached through the Geneva Accords appeared to benefit all the parties that participated in the process. It provided the Soviet Union with an honorable premise to withdraw their forces, it legitimized the DRA as the representative government of Afghanistan, and it set conditions for open elections and the repatriation of Afghan refugees. However, the lack of a viable interim government from the resistance enabled the DRA to remain in power unopposed. Additionally, the effect of the separate United States-Soviet agreement of symmetry was beneficial to the DRA and ensured continuing aid from the Soviet Union. For the mujahedeen, the symmetry agreement proved to have a negative effect. Symmetry further divided an already fragile mujahedeen alliance by increasing Pakistani influence and fueling an internal struggle to for power. Another underling flaw of the accords was the lack of interest in developing a political solution to the conflict after the Soviets withdrew. Whether or not an alternative political body could have been assembled under the circumstances is outside the scope of this paper. However, the effects of not developing a political solution prior to the withdrawal ultimately undermined the military solution of the Geneva negotiations.

⁵³Gregory Feifer, *The Great Gamble: The Soviet War in Afghanistan* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2009), 250-251.

THE RISE AND FALL OF THE MUJAHEDDEEN

“The side that has superiors and subordinates united in purpose will take the victory”⁵⁴

—Sun Tzu, *the Art of Warfare*

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 did not initiate the popular uprising in the country. Prior to the invasion, localized resistance movements had already begun and were gaining momentum. These earlier movements came in response to the DRA's attempt at nationwide land reform and the oppression of traditional religious and social practice. Instead, the Soviet invasion was a catalyst that enabled these scattered disenfranchised groups to aggregate. The product of this aggregation adopted the title of the mujahedeen. Mujahedeen is an Arabic word that describes “one who is on Jihad” or “struggler.” It is an individualistic term as opposed to pluralistic, and it does not represent a unifying cause or ideology other than that of Jihad.⁵⁵ The vaguely defined mujahedeen has become the most commonly used term to describe the loosely structured coalition of Afghan resistance fighters. As the conflict progressed, the mujahedeen began to develop structure and organization that eventually led to establishment of the Peshawar Seven.⁵⁶ As the possibility of a Soviet withdrawal became eminent, the Peshawar Seven scrambled to transform itself into a legitimate governing body. Lacking a unifying ideology or purpose, these loosely formed alliances began to deteriorate with the withdrawal of Soviet forces. The ideological differences and conflicting interests disregarded during the conflict with the Soviets now emerged as the varying groups fought to gain position within the new government. As the dispute over the distribution of power, developed, key members of the Peshawar Seven became disillusioned and withdrew from the process. On the cusp of victory, the mujahedeen

⁵⁴Roger T. Ames, translator, *Sun-Tzu: the Art of Warfare: the First English Translation Incorporating the Recently Discovered Yin-ch'üeh-shan Texts* (New York, NY: Ballantine Books, 1993), 113.

⁵⁵Russian General Staff, *The Soviet-Afghan War*, 53.

⁵⁶Khalilzad, “Prospects for the Afghan Interim Government” 1-4.

were losing their unifying purpose, resisting the Soviet Forces and failing to transform the movement into a legitimate government.

Rise of the Peshawar Seven

The decentralized nature of Afghanistan, both in its culture and geography, has been a primary obstacle to the formation of a nationalist identity or the unification of organizations throughout its history.⁵⁷ This decentralization limited the ability of early resistance groups to aggregate and synchronize their efforts effectively. Organized as tribal militias, these early groups operated primarily within their traditional homelands under local leadership with local support.⁵⁸ As the conflict progressed leaders emerged from various groups and began to organize and coordinate efforts in increasingly larger spheres of influence. As the mujahedeen groups grew, they became increasingly more vulnerable to Soviet and DRA attack, and as a result most of them relocated their leadership to an adjoining state, primarily Pakistan and Iran.

This rapid growth of mujahedeen groups operating along the border regions was a cause for concern for the closest neighbors of Afghanistan early in the conflict.⁵⁹ As the conflict in Afghanistan continued through the 1980's, Pakistan and Iran became increasingly concerned over the number refugees and armed resistance groups operating from within their borders. As a method of controlling these armed groups, both states became involved in organizing and influencing the movements.⁶⁰ The rapid influx of refugees and mujahedeen into Pakistan soon overwhelmed its resources, prompting other countries to respond. As mentioned in the previous section, the United States and Saudi Arabia soon became the largest providers of foreign aid and

⁵⁷Barfield, *Afghanistan: a Cultural and Political History*, 42-49.

⁵⁸Russian General Staff, ed., *The Soviet-Afghan War*, 56-57.

⁵⁹Thomas A. Bruscino, *Out of Bounds: Transnational Sanctuary in Irregular Warfare*, Global War on Terrorism Occasional Paper 17 (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute, 2006), 55-58 .

⁶⁰Russian General Staff, ed., *The Soviet-Afghan War*, 53-55.

influence. The added resources created a distribution issue among the various mujahedeen groups. In order to manage the distribution of aid and coordinate efforts, the Pakistani ISI helped unify the largest resistance groups within their borders. The alliance formed in May of 1985, as the Islamic Unity of Afghan mujahedeen, helped unite the various resistance groups into a broad coalition. Its membership consisted of seven different groups: Hezbi-Islami (Gulbuddin Hekmatyar), Jamiati-Islami (Rabbani), Hezbi-Islami (Khalis), Ittehad-i-Islami (Saayaf), Harakati-Inqilabi-Islami (Gailani), and Jabhai-Nijati-Milli-Afghanistan (Mojaddedi).⁶¹ The alliance operated out of Peshawar in the North-West Frontier Province of Pakistan, lending to one of their various titles as the Peshawar Seven.⁶² Aligned primarily along tribal or ethnic lines, the Peshawar Seven would often revert to pursuing their own separate interests.⁶³ Complicating this matter was the lack of coordination and control with the ground commanders of the seven parties that operated within Afghanistan.

Pakistan continued to expand its control over the Peshawar Seven through the distribution of aid and by coordinating the fighting in Afghanistan. This approach served two purposes. First the ISI needed to limit the threat of a mujahedeen armed rebellion within Pakistan. Second, they wanted to help the mujahedeen formulate a strategy that would defeat the Soviet Union.⁶⁴ As the scope of the conflict in Afghanistan grew, the Pakistani influence over the mujahedeen leadership grew. By the end of 1985, all arms and aid provided by the United States and Saudi Arabia flowed through Pakistan's ISI.⁶⁵ The creation of the Peshawar Seven helped unify the actions in

⁶¹Khalilzad, "Prospects for the Afghan Interim Government," 1-3.

⁶²Richard P. Cronin, "Report for Congress: Afghanistan After the Soviet Withdrawal Contenders for Power," (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, March 2, 1989), 1.

⁶³Khalilzad, "Prospects for the Afghan Interim Government," 13.

⁶⁴Angelo Rasanayagam, *Afghanistan: a Modern History: Monarchy, Despotism or Democracy?: the Problems of Governance in the Muslim Tradition* (New York, NY: I. B. Tauris, 2003), 110.

⁶⁵Khalilzad, "Prospects for the Afghan Interim Government," 23.

Afghanistan to an extent. Resistance ground commanders had to align themselves with one of the seven parties in order to receive the incoming aid. Consequently, any ground force commander who disagreed with the Pakistani ISI concept risked their aid.⁶⁶ This mechanism of aid distribution and coordination was the primary purpose of the Peshawar Seven alliance, which was to create a moderate level of control and unity over the mujahedeen combatants within Afghanistan. As an insurgent or guerrilla force the Peshawar Seven alliance seemed to work well, however, it was completely unsuited for the role as a legitimate governing body.

The Afghanistan Interim Government

By the beginning of 1988, the possibility of a Soviet withdrawal began to take shape through the final round of the Geneva Accords. With the Soviets gone, few expected the DRA to stay in power in Kabul. The lack of an alternative government that could replace the DRA greatly concerned world leaders who had helped drive the negotiated settlement of the accords. Three months prior to the final withdrawal of Soviet forces, the mujahedeen held a shura in Pakistan to elect an interim government.⁶⁷ External interests from Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Iran and the internal tribal interests came to a head during the shura. Both the ISI and the Saudi Intelligence service had observers present throughout the process. This intrusion of foreigners angered some of the participants who were skeptical of their motives.⁶⁸ The entire process of leader selection was confrontational and further divided the participants along party lines. The outcome was the selection of the Seghatullah Mojaddedi as president and Abdul Rasual Sayyaf as prime minister.⁶⁹ However, this came at the expense of alienating several key members of the coalition. Under representation of the Jamiati-Islami party in the shura, alienated many of the Tajik's. Their

⁶⁶Khalilzad, "Prospects for the Afghan Interim Government," 19-20.

⁶⁷Adamec, *Dictionary of Afghan Wars, Revolutions, and Insurgencies*, 304-309.

⁶⁸Cronin, *Report for Congress*, 22-24.

⁶⁹Adamec, *Dictionary of Afghan Wars, Revolutions, and Insurgencies*, 310.

chosen representative, Rabbani perceived the entire process as Pashtu dominated, which the low number of votes in favor of any non-Pashtu candidates supported.⁷⁰ Additionally, Gulbiddin Hekmatyar, the leader of the Hezbi-Islami party and elected Foreign Minister of the AIG soon left and became one the most vocal opponents to its legitimacy.⁷¹ The other members of the Peshawar Seven held differing views on the legitimacy of the AIG, however, it was the loss of Rabbani and Hekmatyar that most affected its legitimacy. These leaders each commanded approximately 60,000 mujahedeen fighters and represented the two largest resistance forces fighting in Afghanistan.⁷²

The representation of the mujahedeen and refugee populations by Pakistan in the accords further eroded the Peshawar Seven's legitimacy. The decision to establish an interim government was announced on February 23, 1988, however, the shura to elect its leadership was not held until the following year. This late establishment of the AIG prevented the mujahedeen or refugees from participating in the Geneva negotiations.⁷³ Consequently, the mujahedeen leaders that did not accept the outcome of the accords were not bound to uphold them. Support for the AIG continued to wane as Soviet forces withdrew from Afghanistan and as a result, infighting among the differing parties would soon reach an all time high.

⁷⁰Khalilzad, "Prospects for the Afghan Interim Government," 15.

⁷¹Ibid., 17.

⁷²Ibid., 13.

⁷³Adamec, *Dictionary of Afghan Wars, Revolutions, and Insurgencies*, 308.

Table 1. Afghan Political Parties

Party	Leader	Sect	Ideology	Ethnic Base	Geographic Base
GOVERNMENT					
PDPA	Najibullah	N/A	Communist	Mixed	Kabul and Cities
Junbish-i Milli-yi Islami	Abdul Rashid Dustom		Moderate & Communist	Uzbek	North Central
PESHAWAR SEVEN ALLIANCE					
Jam'iat-i Islami (Islamic Society)	Burhanuddin Rabbani	Sunni	Moderate Fundamentalist	Tajik	North & northeast
Hezb-i Islami (K) (Islamic Party of Khalis)	Muhammad Yunis Khalis	Sunni	Fundamentalist	Pashtu	Kabul & Southeast
Hezb-i Islami (G) (Islamic Party of Gulbiddin)	Gulbiddin Hekmatyar	Sunni	Radical Fundamentalist	Pashtu	Kabul & Southeast
Ittehad-i-Islami Barayi Azadi (Islamic Union for the Liberation of Afghanistan)	Abdul Rasul Sayyaf	Sunni	Radical Fundamentalist	Pashtu	Southeast
Harakat-i inqilab-i Islami (Islamic Revolutionary Movement)	Maulawi Muhammad Nabi Muhammadi	Sunni	Traditionalist	Pashtu	East
Mahaz-i Milli-yi Islami (National Islamic Front)	Sayyid Ahmad Gailani	Sunni	Traditionalist	Pashtu	South
Jabha-yi Najat-i Milli (National Liberation Front)	Sebghatullah Mujaddidi	Sunni	Traditionalist Royalist	Pashtu	South
SHIA PARTIES					
Shura-yi Inqelabi-yi Ittifaq-i Islami-yi Hazarjat (Revolutionary Counsel of the Islamic Union)	Sayyid Ali Beheshti	Shia	Traditionalist	Hazara	Central
Hizb-i Wahdat (Unity Party)	Abdul Ali Mazari	Shia	Radical Pro-Iranian	Hazara	Central
Harakat-i Islami (Islamic Movement)	Muhammad Asef Muhsini	Shia	Moderate	Hazara	Kabul

Sources: Ludwig W. Adamec, *Dictionary of Afghan Wars, Revolutions, and Insurgencies* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1996), 168-197. And Richard P. Cronin, Report for Congress: *Afghanistan After the Soviet Withdrawal Contenders for Power* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, March 2, 1989), 6.

Mujahedeen alliance dissolves

Prior to 1988, the mujahedeen had limited interest in the establishment of an alternate government for Afghanistan. Therefore, when the single unifying purpose, the Soviet Union, began to withdraw in May the various interests in the conflict began to diverge. A Congressional Research Service report to Congress expressed the United States diminishing interest in the conflict.

Considerable disagreement exists considering the nature of United States interests. Some would argue that now the Soviets have withdrawn their forces the United States has little at stake in the Afghan struggle...and that the United States should largely allow Pakistan a free hand in its dealings with them.⁷⁴

Pakistan desired an Islamic government similar to its own as a regional ally. The Iranians too wanted an Islamic government with a portion of the seats going to the Shia groups that were backed through Iran. The Saudi influence over Pakistan had grown through the conflict and their interests were reflected through the Pakistani ISI.⁷⁵ Divisions emerged within the mujahedeen, the Peshawar Seven each wanted to insure their place among the future leadership while limiting that of the others. This was in contrast to the resistance commanders in Afghanistan who fought primarily for family or tribal interests.⁷⁶ The result was a deeply fractured alliance united along a single line, defeating the Soviets. The mujahedeen were unprepared to transition from the alliance of the Peshawar Seven into a coherent government in February 1989 when the Soviets withdrew.

As the Soviets withdrew from Afghanistan DRA forces were sent to backfill the critical locations among the population centers. This transition period created confusion and apprehension among the DRA troops and leadership. Within days of the withdrawal, 10,000 DRA personnel operating in the north defected to the regional mujahedeen commander, Ahmad

⁷⁴Cronin, *Report for Congress*, 31.

⁷⁵Khalilzad, "Prospects for the Afghan Interim Government," 7.

⁷⁶ Ibid., ix.

Shah Massoud. This was the largest defection of Afghan government personnel throughout the entire conflict.⁷⁷ The ISI knew the transition period would present a moment of vulnerability for the DRA and wanted to capitalize on it. The AIG, in conjunction with Pakistan's ISI, devised a plan to seize Jalalabad and use it to establish a base of government within Afghanistan.⁷⁸ The attack began on 5 March 1989 and resulted in siege of the DRA garrison that ended a few weeks later when DRA reinforcements were able to break through the defenses and reinforce the garrison.⁷⁹ The first attempt of mujahedeen forces to transition to conventional warfare as the military arm of the AIG failed. This caused many Afghans to view the attack as a Pakistani instigated operation against Afghans and branded the AIG as an ISI puppet.⁸⁰ Militarily the attack on Jalalabad proved that the DRA was capable of defeating the mujahedeen without direct Soviet assistances.⁸¹ For the mujahedeen the Jalalabad operation was the first time that Afghans were fighting Afghans without a Soviet presents and caused many to question the validity of continuing the conflict. That the mujahedeen alliance had dissolved became evident towards the end of the siege when elements of Gulbidin Hekmatyar's (Pashto) forces ambushed elements of Massoud's (Tajik).⁸² The conflict had now transitioned from a Jihad against an invading force to an Afghan civil war.

⁷⁷Rogers, *The Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan*, 54-55.

⁷⁸Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 194-196.

⁷⁹Adamec, *Dictionary of Afghan Wars, Revolutions, and Insurgencies*, 308.

⁸⁰Rasanayagam, *Afghanistan: a Modern History*, 126-128.

⁸¹Soviet advisors that remained in Afghanistan after the withdrawal were there on a covert basis, therefore the perception among the Afghans was that the Najibullah regime had the defeated the Mujahedeen without Soviet assistance. For more information see; Grau, "Breaking Contact.", 258; Theodore L. Eliot Jr, "Afghanistan in 1989: Stalemate." in "A Survey of Asia in 1989: Part II," special issue, *Asian Survey* 30, no. 2 (February, 1990): 158-166; Olikar, *Building Afghanistan's Security Forces*, 48-51, 78.

⁸²Mohammad Yousaf and Mark Adkin, *The Bear Trap: Afghanistan's Untold Story* (London, UK: Leo Cooper, 1992), 230-231.

The rise and fall of the mujahedeen through the course of the Afghan-Soviet conflict follows the Mao Tse-tung model of protracted war.⁸³ The Department of the Army FM 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*, summarizes Mao's three stages of protracted war as the strategic defense (Stage I), the strategic stalemate (stage II), and the strategic counteroffensive (Stage III). In the strategic defense, the insurgent force gathers support, establishes bases of operations and solicits external support and aid. In the strategic stalemate, the insurgent force expands its base of support and begins to challenge the ruling government's legitimacy. In the strategic counteroffensive the insurgent force transitions, both militarily and politically to conventional operations and is prepared to replace the ruling government.⁸⁴ The mujahedeen accomplished the strategic defense and stalemate stages of Mao's model. They gained the internal support of rural populations, established basing in both Pakistan and Iran, and gathered external support through foreign aid. They were able to expand their support and challenge the DRA with aggregation of the mujahedeen groups, forming the Peshawar Seven. However, when the Peshawar Seven attempted to transition from an alliance to a legitimate government with the AIG they failed. The AIG seemed postured for victory with the successful transitions of Mao's stages I and II, the sanctuary offered by Pakistan and Iran and the wealth of foreign support they enjoyed. The failure happened because they had lost their unifying ideology, the Jihad, when the Soviets withdrew. The alliance began to lose its cohesion in 1988 when the Geneva Accords were signed and culminated with the failed assault on Jalalabad in 1989. In an interesting paradigm shift, it was the mujahedeen suffered the most from the Soviet withdrawal.

THE NAJIBULLAH REGIME SUCCESS

⁸³Mao Tse-tung, "On Protracted War," Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung, accessed January 30, 2014, http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2_09.htm.

⁸⁴Department of the Army, FM 3-24, *Counterinsurgency* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, December 2006), 1-6 – 1-7.

“So long as I have not overthrown my opponent I am bound to fear he may overthrow me.”⁸⁵

—Carl Von Clausewitz, *On War*

As the Soviets prepared to depart from Afghanistan, the DRA readied themselves for the mujahedeen onslaught that was to come. Although confidence was low, the DRA had some advantages. First, their involvement in the negotiations of the Geneva Accords provided validation of their legitimacy as a ruling government. Second, recent changes in the PDPA leadership provided the DRA with a new confident and charismatic leader, capable of bringing about change. The new leader was Dr. Muhammad Najibullah and with the help of his Soviet advisors, he implemented broad social, political, and military changes that enabled DRA success. An essential aspect to the DRA’s success after the Soviet withdrawal was the continued financial and military support that the DRA received. The rapid collapse of the DRA in January 1992, less than a month after the withdrawal of Soviet aid, is a strong indicator of its decisive role in their existence.⁸⁶ However, the success of the DRA in the interim is not solely attributable to this continued influx of aid. Najibullah implemented fundamental changes in the DRA’s governing policies that enabled the regime’s success post-withdrawal. The increased legitimacy of the Afghan government, aided by the National Reconciliation Policy and a departure from communist ideologies, empowered the Najibullah regime. These factors enabled the DRA to co-opt disenfranchised groups and strength their relative advantage over the mujahedeen.

Najibullah as a leader

Dr. Muhammad Najibullah was the Soviet Union’s handpicked predecessor to replace Babrak Karmal as the Afghanistan Head of State. Born in Kabul in 1947, Najibullah developed in

⁸⁵Carl von Clausewitz, *On War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 77.

⁸⁶Ralph H. Magnus and Eden Naby, *Afghanistan: Mullah, Marx, and Mujahid* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998), 134.

an environment of great reform. Kabul was the epicenter of cultural liberalism in Afghanistan at the time. Najibullah's formal education led him to a degree in medicine from Kabul University in 1975.⁸⁷ At about the same time that Najibullah began his higher education, a popular communist movement was growing among the Afghan educated class. Early in his education, Najibullah became politically active in this movement, officially joining the Parcham faction of the PDPA. Over the next several years, Najibullah's outspoken political views and activities led to his rise within the party and multiple arrests by the opposition.⁸⁸

In April of 1978 the communist movement in Afghanistan came to a head in the Saur Revolution, when the PDPA seized control of the government and established the DRA.⁸⁹ Shortly after seizing control, a violent power struggle erupted within the PDPA between the two separate parties, the Parcham party and the Khaliq party. The Khaliq party, known for its hard-line conformity to Marxist doctrine, was the stronger party and named Nur Muhammad Taraki as the head of state. Immediately, Taraki began implementing broad cultural reform throughout the country that included land reform, equal rights for women, and a purge of all oppositional forces to the new regime.⁹⁰ The purge also removed all Parcham party members from positions of influence within the DRA. Reassigned to Tehran as the ambassador to Iran, Najibullah survived the purge. A second purge of the PDPA resulted in Najibullah being relieved of his assignment as ambassador. Choosing to stay in Iran, Najibullah watched as the internal struggle for power in Kabul eventually led to the assassination of Taraki by his deputy Hafizullah Amin. Amin's coup

⁸⁷Adamec, *Dictionary of Afghan Wars, Revolutions, and Insurgencies*, 167.

⁸⁸Frank A. Clements, *Conflict in Afghanistan: a Historical Encyclopedia* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2003), 178.

⁸⁹Jeri Laber and Barnett R. Rubin, *A Nation Is Dying* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1988), 5.

⁹⁰Parcham and Khaliq are translated from Persian as banner and masses respectively, both parties published a political newspaper under their respective titles; Adamec, *Dictionary of Afghan Wars, Revolutions, and Insurgencies*, 182-185.

further exacerbated the growing civil unrest within Afghanistan and ultimately led to the Soviet decision to intervene in December 1979.⁹¹ On 27 December, Soviet forces killed Amin at his home in Kabul and placed the Parcham party in control of the DRA. Babrak Karmal became the head of state, enabling Najibullah's return from exile in Tehran.⁹² Soon after, Najibullah became the head of the KhAD where he would serve until 1986. It was during this time that Najibullah established himself within the PDPD as an efficient and organized leader, capable of achieving results. The KhAD worked closely with the KGB in Afghanistan and soon became the premier arm of the DRA's defense ministry for combating the mujahedeen.⁹³ During his tenure, the KhAD became very proficient at extracting information from captured resistance members, earning him praise among key Soviet leaders and fear from the mujahedeen.⁹⁴

In 1985 new Soviet leadership, headed by Mikhail Gorbachev focused their attention on ending the Afghan problem.⁹⁵ Dissatisfied with the lack of progress in the conflict thus far, Gorbachev was determined to end the Soviet involvement. Primarily, they were disappointed in Karmal's ability to influence change and determined that a change in leadership was required. The Soviets chose Najibullah as the leader to oversee the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan.⁹⁶ Aside from the proficiencies already mentioned, Najibullah was an intellectual and a confident public speaker. While still a member of the Parcham party, he remained relatively neutral in the political infighting that occurred between the Khalis and Parchams. Unlike his

⁹¹Adamec, *Dictionary of Afghan Wars, Revolutions, and Insurgencies*, 184.

⁹²Frank A. Clements, *Conflict in Afghanistan: a Historical Encyclopedia* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2003), 178.

⁹³Gilles Dorronsoro, *Revolution Unending: Afghanistan, 1979 to the Present*, trans. John King (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2005), 178-179.

⁹⁴Rasanayagam, *Afghanistan: a Modern History*, 118-119.

⁹⁵Rasanayagam, *Afghanistan: a Modern History*, 118-119.

⁹⁶Anthony Arnold, *The Fateful Pebble: Afghanistan's Role in the Fall of the Soviet Empire* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1993), 150-151.

predecessor Babrak Karmal, Najibullah was of the ethnic majority Pashtu tribe, which broadened his base of support.⁹⁷ Babrak Karmal relinquished the position of general secretary of the PDPA to Najibullah in May 1986. Soon after, the Loya Jirga confirmed Najibullah as President of the DRA in November of 1987.⁹⁸

Changing Policies

Political Social Change

The peaceful transition of power from Karmal to Najibullah marked a turning point in Soviet Afghan War. No longer determined to establish a communist regime in Kabul, the Soviets now encouraged a popularly supported democratic government that would remain pro-Soviet.⁹⁹ Encouraged by the Kremlin, Najibullah embarked on a new policy to unify the fractured Afghanistan. First, he had to unite the PDPA and gain the support of the influential population of Kabul. Second, he had to gain the support of the rural populations. Third, he needed to reconcile with the mujahedeen and stop the violence that threatened the new regime.

To unite the PDPA parties, Najibullah offered top positions within the regime to key Khaliq party members, as well as non-communist members in an effort to diversify the DRA leadership.¹⁰⁰ Initially, these efforts were met with some success as both parties were willing to

⁹⁷Anthony Arnold, *The Fateful Pebble: Afghanistan's Role in the Fall of the Soviet Empire* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1993), 150-152. Adamec, 143-144 describes Karmal's ethnic background as "purportedly to be a Ghilzai Pashtu", part of the traditional rival to the ruling class of Afghanistan. Adamec also states that Karmal was "an excellent orator in Dari", which is the language of the Pashtu's. Maley, 712 states, "Karmal claimed to be a Durrani Pashtu", the tribal rival of Ghilzai and traditional ruling class. What is evident is that Karmal's ethnic identity was suspect and therefore adversely affected his legitimacy among the Pashtu.

⁹⁸A Jirga is a traditional Pashtu tribal organization that has the legislative and judicial power to decide matters of importance. The Loya Jirga is the highest form of Jirga and serves as a national council to decide matters of state importance. The Loya Jirga consisting of appointed and elected representatives from the major tribal, ethnic, and government organizations to decide national matters of importance. Adamec, *Dictionary of Afghan Wars, Revolutions, and Insurgencies*, 150 and 303.

⁹⁹Arnold, *The Fateful Pebble*, 155.

¹⁰⁰Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*, 153-154.

work together in order to withstand the mujahedeen. However, after the Soviets withdrew, internal opposition to the Najibullah regime continued to grow. The Khaliq faction was unsatisfied with both the number and status of the positions offered. Furthermore, Najibullah's divergence from communist ideology alienated the hardliner Marxists of the Khaliq party.¹⁰¹ Within his own Parcham party Najibullah's actions were viewed as detrimental to the monopoly of power that was established under Karmal. This caused the party to subdivide even further into pro-Karmal Parcham and pro-Najibullah factions.¹⁰²

In an effort to gain public support for the new regime, Najibullah began to distance himself from the communist ideologies of the previous regime. His first step, arguably under the influence of his Soviet advisors, was to establish a Loya Jirga and ratify a new constitution. The constitution changed the name of the government to the Republic of Afghanistan, established a popularly elected parliament with a prime minister, and established a Loya Jirga to elect the president. At the second congress in 1990, the parliament denounced socialism and proclaimed its new course in pursuing an Islamic democracy.¹⁰³ This attempt to co-opt support from the outlying rural populations was particularly successful in the north among the non-Pashtu populations.¹⁰⁴

One of the primary sources of the Afghan public's discontent with the DRA arose from its suppression of traditional and religious activities. The early regime's attempt to modernize Afghanistan through socialized policies resulted in the wide spread opposition and eventually the resistance movement of the mujahedeen. In an effort to regain popular support, Najibullah attempted to correct this error and reimage the DRA as a defender of traditional Islamic values. As head of the KhAD, Najibullah changed his name to the singular Najib to distance himself

¹⁰¹Arnold, *The Fateful Pebble*, 150.

¹⁰²Dorronsoro, *Revolution Unending*, 194-195.

¹⁰³Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*, 146-148.

¹⁰⁴*Ibid.*, 154.

from the Islamic origins of his given name Muhammad Sayyid Najibullah. To reassert himself as a true Muslim, Najib reattached the religious ending to his name, once again becoming Najibullah.¹⁰⁵ Previous DRA leadership had eliminated all references of Islam in the government, arresting religious leaders who spoke out against the communist regime. Now under the new policy, the government publicized the release of imprisoned religious leaders and funded reconstruction projects to rebuild destroyed mosques.¹⁰⁶ This reaffirmation of Islam within the DRA, and by Najibullah personally, was intended to gain the support of the less populated areas outside of Kabul.

The greatest threat to a post-Soviet Afghan government was the lack of internal security caused by the multiple mujahedeen elements operating throughout the country. To address this issue Najibullah developed and implemented the National Reconciliation Policy, aimed at co-opting the resistance. The policy goals were to incorporate key mujahedeen leaders into a coalition government, facilitate the return of refugees, and integrate mujahedeen forces into the national defense.¹⁰⁷ A key aspect of the National Reconciliation Policy was an extension of the DRA cease-fire declared in December of 1986, following one the most violent years of the conflict.¹⁰⁸ The cease-fire extension included a call for negotiations with opposition leaders to end the hostilities. Additionally, Najibullah reached out the former king Zahir Shah in an effort to open the lines of communication between the DRA and mujahedeen.¹⁰⁹ Former mujahedeen leaders were encouraged to get involved in local or tribal government functions, including

¹⁰⁵ Arnold, *The Fateful Pebble*, 151.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 154

¹⁰⁷ Najibullah, *Afghanistan: Taking the Path of Reconciliation* (Kabul, Afghanistan: Government Committee of Press and Publication, 1988), 147-149.

¹⁰⁸ Heela Najibullah, *Afghan Attempts at Peace and Reconciliation 1986 and 2010: A Comparison*, ed. Supriya Roychoudhury (New Delhi, India: The Peace & Conflict Program, 2011), 9.

¹⁰⁹ Najibullah, *Afghan Attempts at Peace and Reconciliation 1986 and 2010*, 14.

securing their home regions, provided they lay their arms down and accept government support from Kabul.¹¹⁰

Unfortunately for the new regime these initial measures of reconciliation did not achieve the desired results. Few mujahedeen leaders crossed over to the government side. Those who did came from the disenfranchised groups operating on the periphery of the Peshawar Seven, receiving limited external support.¹¹¹ The common belief among the majority of the mujahedeen was that the Soviets would not uphold their commitment to withdrawal. Even if the Soviets did withdraw, the mujahedeen were confident in their ability to overthrow the DRA. Either way there was little incentive for the mujahedeen to reconcile, prior to spring of 1988. After the spring of 1988, several of the factors already discussed began to bolster support for the reconciliation. The signing of the Geneva Accords created apprehension among the mujahedeen that feared losing their external support. The fragmentation of the AIG and the mujahedeen leaders caused the Afghan popular support for these organizations to wane. After, the social and political changes in the DRA became more effective in drawing support.¹¹²

Military Change

During the early years of the Soviet-Afghan War, the preponderance of military actions conducted against the mujahedeen had Soviet forces in the lead. This not only included the execution of tactical actions, but the planning, sustaining and the political decision making actions as well.¹¹³ With Najibullah in the lead, the Soviets started relinquishing control of the security situation to the DRA. This transition required the Soviets to develop a force capable of

¹¹⁰Najibullah, *Afghan Attempts at Peace and Reconciliation 1986 and 2010*, 10.

¹¹¹*Ibid.*, 16.

¹¹²Robert L. Canfield, "Afghanistan: The Trajectory of Internal Alignments," *The Middle East Journal* 43, no. 4 (Autumn 1989): 646.

¹¹³Rodric Braithwaite, *Afgantsy: the Russians in Afghanistan, 1979-89* (Oxford, USA: Oxford University Press, 2011), 148.

building the DRA's military and leadership capabilities. They used an incentives-based program to attract their best personnel to this mission, offering additional pay to those who volunteered.¹¹⁴ The hand-over would start with transitioning key border sites first, followed by the buildup of forces in essential population centers and along lines of communication. This enabled forces to withdraw from less essential areas and consolidate where needed.¹¹⁵ Najibullah leveraged the National Reconciliation policy to co-opt local militias to help offset the lack of security. By 1990, the tribal militias peaked between 60,000 and 70,000 personnel and operated with relative autonomy in the less populated rural areas.¹¹⁶ The mujahedeen's harsh treatment of militia members caught working with the DRA provided extra incentive to ensure the regimes survival.¹¹⁷ The combination of concentrating forces in essential areas and using local militias in less crucial areas gave the appearance of an overall increase in security.

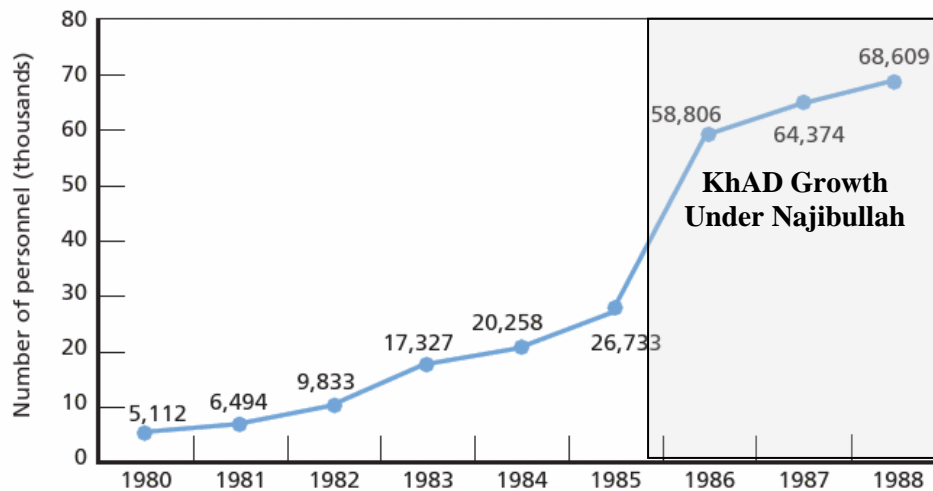


Figure 1. Increase in KhAD personnel over time.

Source: Olga Oliker, *Building Afghanistan's Security Forces in Wartime*, 33.

¹¹⁴Braithwaite, *Afgantsy*, 150.

¹¹⁵Oliker, *Building Afghanistan's Security Forces in Wartime*, 74-75.

¹¹⁶*Ibid.*, 57-58.

¹¹⁷Klass, "Afghanistan: The Accords," 939.

The DRA also sought to increase the capabilities of its state intelligence agency, the KhAD.¹¹⁸ Figure 1 shows the growth of the KhAD prior to the Soviet withdrawal. Working with Soviet KGB operatives, the KhAD became the premier counterinsurgency tool in the Soviet-Afghan war. The KhAD consisted primarily of Parcham party members with strong loyalties to Najibullah, and in 1986 it was renamed the Wizarat-I Ettela'at-I Daulati (WAD) and elevated to the cabinet level as the Ministry of Security reporting directly to the President. The KhAD/WAD enabled the DRA in a variety of ways. Internally, the KhAD/WAD gathered information on counter revolutionaries, local militias, and other opposition groups within Afghanistan.¹¹⁹ Externally, the KhAD/WAD infiltrated the refugee camps in Pakistan, eventually acquiring positions among the main mujahedeen groups, passing information to the DRA and generating discontent among the rebels.¹²⁰ The KhAD provided a valuable capability to the DRA in their struggle against the mujahedeen, providing increased security and intelligence for the government.

Another area of military buildup that influenced the next several years of DRA control was that of the Afghanistan Air Force. Throughout the 1980's the Soviets spent considerable effort in developing this capability. The Soviets selected and trained DRA pilots, resulting in selection rates often below ten percent.¹²¹ The selectivity of the program greatly increased the Air Force's capability. The introduction of the shoulder fired anti-aircraft (Stinger) missile in 1986 offset this advantage.¹²² This proved to be a significant counteraction to the air dominance

¹¹⁸Oliker, *Building Afghanistan's Security Forces in Wartime*, 33.

¹¹⁹Ibid., 32.

¹²⁰Mitrokhin, *The KGB in Afghanistan*, 135-145.

¹²¹Oliker, *Building Afghanistan's Security Forces in Wartime*, 48.

¹²²Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 11.

enjoyed by Soviet and DRA aircraft thus far. However, this did not prevent the DRA Air Force from having a critical effect on the mujahedeen's defeat during the siege of Jalalabad in 1989.¹²³

The Soviet leadership handpicked Najibullah based on his previous performance as the head of the KhAD. He was a charismatic leader with an ability to manage organizational change. Under his leadership, the DRA made an effort to gain popular support by distancing itself from the communist ideologies of the Karmal regime. While this departure from communism caused some dissension among the PDPA, it enabled the DRA to improve its appeal to the broader population of Afghanistan. Additionally, Najibullah turned to his religious roots in an effort to reinvent the DRA as an Islamic government. His tribal affiliation with the traditional ruling Ghilzai Pashtu tribe provided a basis of support that was lacking in previous regimes. These factors combined increased the internal legitimacy of the DRA with Najibullah as the ruler. External legitimacy came through the United Nations' recognition of the DRA in the Geneva Accords. This growth in internal and external legitimacy empowered Najibullah and provided the DRA with an opportunity to broaden its base of support as the Soviets withdrew from Afghanistan.

The National Reconciliation Policy combined with military reform increased the regime's ability to defeat the mujahedeen. The DRA was able to bridge the security gap created with the Soviet withdrawal by the consolidating in key areas, increasing tribal militias in less essential areas, and leveraging the capabilities of the KhAD and Air Force. The effectiveness of this change is evident in the DRA's defeat of the mujahedeen at Jalalabad in 1989. This victory built upon the DRA's legitimacy and provided a surge in the number of mujahedeen leaders that were willing to reconcile with the government.¹²⁴ This increased legitimacy of the Afghan

¹²³Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 193-194.

¹²⁴Barfield, *Afghanistan: a Cultural and Political History*, 240-241.

government, aided by the National Reconciliation Policy and a departure from communist ideologies, empowered the Najibullah regime. This increase in legitimacy enabled the DRA to strengthen their base of support among the Afghan populations. To maintain this advantage the DRA required vast amounts of military and humanitarian aid.¹²⁵

CONCLUSION

The Collapse

The DRA's control of Afghanistan began to unravel in the winter of 1991-92 when an agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union brought an end to the foreign aid from both countries.¹²⁶ Without the foreign aid, Najibullah could not maintain the gains made through the National Reconciliation Policy. Likewise, the DRA security forces that enabled the government to remain in power after the Soviet withdrawal lost its resourcing. Without payment, neither the military forces nor the militias remained loyal to the regime.¹²⁷ Reapplying the buzkashi metaphor, the DRA team dissolved with its players aligning with other groups that would provide them gain in the competition. Local militias aligned along tribal or ethnic lines, while the DRA and PDPA leaders sought to establish their own groups or branches within established groups. Afghanistan's buzkashi game disintegrated into chaotic free-for-all competition. A multitude of competing alliances emerged to consolidate whatever power or resources were unclaimed, similar to the scrum that occurs over a dropped goat carcass in the traditional buzkashi competition. The final downfall of the DRA was sudden. However, in the interim between the withdrawal and collapse they had surpassed all expectations. With Najibullah as the leader, the DRA had controlled the game for three years. They did so by co-opting

¹²⁵Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*, 153-164.

¹²⁶*Ibid.*, 266-269.

¹²⁷Dorransoro, *Revolution Unending*, 205-206.

disenfranchised groups and strength the DRA's relative advantage over the Mujahedeen. The legitimization of the DRA through the Geneva Accords established its authority, both internally and externally. The fractured resistance movement was unable to challenge that authority, due to the loss of its unifying cause of defeating the Soviets. Finally, the National Reconciliation Policy allowed the DRA establish control in rural areas, broadening its authority.

DRA Success vs. Mujahedeen failure

After the Soviet withdrawal the DRA increased its legitimacy, conversely the mujahedeen experienced a decrease in their perceived legitimacy during this time. The noted sociologist and political economist Max Weber's theory on the origins of legitimate domination of a bureaucracy provide some insight into how the DRA was able to increase its legitimacy. He theorized that the foundations of legitimacy originate from three forms, rational, traditional and charismatic. The rational form of legitimacy is derived from a regime's legal basis of rule and the right to which a ruler receives his authority. The traditional form is derived from long-standing cultural traditions that validate the position of those in authority. Finally, the charismatic form of legitimacy originates from the character and actions of the person or organization in authority.¹²⁸

The Geneva Accords process provided the DRA with its basis of rational legitimacy, both internally and externally. Externally, the recognition of the DRA as a member state within the United Nations legitimized their position and authority to negotiate on behalf of the people of Afghanistan.¹²⁹ It was the DRA's signing of the accords that ended the Soviet occupation. Even though it was the violent resistance of the mujahedeen that motivated the Soviets withdrawal, it was the legal authority of the DRA that enabled the final action. The mujahedeen's inability to

¹²⁸Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, ed. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1978), Volume 1: 212-215.

¹²⁹Corwin, *Doomed in Afghanistan*, 11-12.

unify under an alternate government prevented them from challenging the DRA's the rational legitimacy. Therefore, they remained unrecognized as negotiating party and legally excluded from accords throughout the negotiations.¹³⁰ The rational legitimization of the DRA as the sovereign authority for Afghanistan sanctioned the continuation of Soviet aid after their withdrawal. The terms of the Geneva Accords called for an end of foreign support to rebellious or secessionist activities, it did not address continued financial and material support to the legitimate authority.¹³¹ Conversely, it made illicit the continued support to the mujahedeen, resulting in the agreement of symmetry. The arrangement allowed the United States to continue its support to the resistance, contrary to the accords. This weakened the external legitimacy of that support. The Geneva Accords left Najibullah and the DRA in power and receiving valid external support. Conversely, the agreement did nothing to legitimize the mujahedeen or the AIG and threatened to sever the external support from which they derived their authority.

The consolidation of traditional legitimacy, derived through long-standing social and cultural traditions, proved difficult to obtain by either side. The diverse ethnic and tribal traditions produced by the fragmented geography and sociology of Afghanistan make consolidation problematic.¹³² Monarchical structure of government in Afghanistan formed in the early 18th century, with the traditional authority derived through the lineage of Durrani, Pashtu tribe.¹³³ The extent their rule in Afghanistan and their ability to project authority was limited to the population centers within the tribal lands. Outside of these areas, localized autonomy with tribal, ethnic, or family base rule was the traditional norm.¹³⁴ The decentralized nature of Afghan politics and

¹³⁰Cordovez and Harrison, *Out of Afghanistan*, 7-8.

¹³¹Anonymous, "A UN Success: Four-Part Afghanistan Agreement Signed in Geneva," 7.

¹³²Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*, 22-32.

¹³³Ademec, *Dictionary of Afghan Wars, Revolutions, and Insurgencies*, 89-91, 110-111.

¹³⁴Barfield, *Afghanistan*, 17-23

social development prevented any single group from consolidating authority based on traditions. Najibullah's singular claim to traditional legitimacy derived through his Ghilizia Pashtu heritage. Among the Pashtu the Ghilizia tribe is second in size and prestige only to the Durrani and has challenged the Durrani claim to authority throughout the country's history.¹³⁵ Najibullah attempted to broaden his traditional appeal through reconciliation and granting local autonomy to loyal tribes and militia groups. Despite his efforts to gain traditional legitimacy, Najibullah and the DRA were not able to shed their association with the Soviets.

The mujahedeen leaders drew upon a combination of traditional and charismatic legitimacy to form the basis of their authority. Non-Pashtu leaders such as Massoud and Dustom appealed to their constituency based on their ability to lead and win against their opponents. They also shared an ethnic or tribal affiliation with their supports. However, both proved ineffective at broadening their support among Pashtu. In Peshawar Pakistan, the mujahedeen's most influential leaders used Islamic fundamentalist rhetoric, a form of charismatic legitimacy, to gain authority.¹³⁶ These include Rabbani, Hekmaryar, Khalis and Sayyaf, all of which rose to key leadership positions within the AIG as it was developed. After the Soviets withdrew their forces these leaders were unable to expand their base of authority and gain the rational legitimacy. Nor were these leaders able to broaden their traditional legitimacy beyond their own ethnic or tribal constituency. This lack of legitimate authority led to the fracturing of the AIG, resulting with each leader aligning along their respective basis of support.

This loss of unity among the mujahedeen changed the context of the buzkashi competition after the Soviets withdrew. The struggle was no longer between two dominant

¹³⁵Ademec, *Dictionary of Afghan Wars, Revolutions, and Insurgencies*, 110-111.

¹³⁶For more detailed information on the origins of charismatic authority see, Weber, *Economy and Society*, 241-245. Table 1 of this monograph identifies those mujahedeen groups with fundamental ideologies.

opponents, such as the DRA and the mujahedeen. It now consisted of smaller, sometimes regional, competitions among the various mujahedeen groups, and sometimes the DRA. In this new context, the DRA had the advantage over the smaller less organized groups. This advantage enabled them to draw several of the smaller groups to their side, further increasing their advantage. Increasing violence emerged from within the remnants of the Peshawar Seven as they vied for position in this new buzkaishi contest. The game changed a second time in 1992 when the Soviets ceased supporting the DRA and regime fell. The competition was chaotic until another dominate team arose, this time the Taliban, and country eased back into its stalemate status with smaller opponents maintaining localized advantage and the dominate opponent controlling Kabul.

In a traditionally dominated society such as Afghanistan, authority must incorporate all three of Weber's forms of legitimate domination. The origin of rational legitimacy must come from both, the population and from external sources such as other nations or global organizations. The DRA were unable to gain rational legitimatization, but were unable to expand into traditional or charismatic legitimacy. Conversely, the Taliban derived authority through traditional and charismatic legitimacy, but were unable to achieve a position of rational legitimacy.¹³⁷ Balancing the government's authority along rational, traditional, and charismatic lines will be the challenge of any ruling body in Afghanistan.

¹³⁷For more information on the external views of the Taliban as the legal authority of Afghanistan, see Barfield, *Afghanistan*, 263-268; Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 350, 430; and Magnus and Naby, *Afghanistan*, 191-195.

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